

Voices for Virginia's Children 2017 Candidate Survey

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Question 1: Early learning is one of the most important components to ensuring that every child in Virginia has the foundation to be successful. Given the fiscal constraints the Commonwealth of Virginia continues to face coupled with the uncertainty of the federal budget decisions directly affecting education, having a true “system” of early learning in Virginia would allow for the greatest maximization of resources so that more children can get the building blocks they deserve. I would support consolidating programs to meet that goal as long as there is not a diminution of services provided or a decrease in the number of children served.

Question 2: To improve outcomes, I believe the Commonwealth should invest more in foster care generally but also target that investment to focus more on the child and families once they are reunited. Making sure that the families, parents and children, are ready to be together must be an integral part of the foster care system. Only focusing on the child misses a significant part of the equation—the parents/family who also needs support to become a strong and healthy family.

Question 3:

During the 2017 legislative session, there were a number of bills introduced that would have reduced the amount of time that a student can be suspended and would've eliminated long term suspensions for our youngest students. Unfortunately, all but one of those bills were left in committees. If they are re-introduced, I will fully support those measures. Moreover, if they are not I will introduce those bills, hoping to build consensus for a solution that works for children. If reelected, I would like to build upon the existing bill that was passed this session, HB 1924/SB 829, that directed the Board of Education to establish alternatives to short and long-term suspensions.

Question 4:

I would support the state increasing its share to continue providing health care services to low income children.

Question 5:

If reelected, I would support legislation/policy changes that allow for recovering the entire family and not just the family member who is suffering from addiction. As the son and brother of addicts, I know first hand what impacts this health care issue can have on a family and community. We have a moral responsibility to get this issue right.

Question 6:

Often, our agencies that deal with children are siloed and lacking the necessary communication infrastructure to enhance efficiency. To facilitate efficient cross- agency collaboration, I would support solutions that strengthen the communication infrastructure and data sharing between agencies. With ever-evolving technology, we can build a system that allows for data sharing while at the same time safeguarding privacy.

Question 7:

A significant barrier to effective mental health care for children is a lack of understanding of mental health issues that children suffer from. We have to invest more in early diagnosis and treatment. Moreover, increasing our educators' ability to provide trauma informed care in our school systems is an essential step. Finally, the expansion of Medicaid would have resulted in \$211 million being directed towards improving mental health services, combatting heroin and opioid addiction, and more. If reelected, I will continue to fight for additional funding towards mental health care and more public-private partnerships.

Question 8:

To address the achievement gap in Pre-K to 12 education, I would first examine the metrics for achievement. I would like to see an educational system that focuses on the progression of students in addition to achievement. I would address this by focusing on the number of SOLs that students must take each year and work to reduce that number. Additionally, I would like to introduce bills that fund more wraparound services for students in indigent and poor-performing areas; those wraparound services would take the

form of outreach to families, extended learning opportunities, and enhanced cultural competence for both students and teachers.